S. Zwick 2/4/92

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Taken From

Economic and Cultural Problems in Evanston, Illinois

As They Relate To The Colored Population

A Study

Conducted for

The Evanston Council of Social Agencies

by

The National Urban League
Department of Research and Community Projects
Warren M. Banner, Director

January-February, 1945

. . . . . .

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Historical Background and Population

Evanston was a city on the Western Frontier in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. Among the first residents of this town, which, in its early years, was known as the "forest city", were persons of color. Some of these are recorded as having arrived before the village was incorporated into the larger city. Their descendants are today found living in this city under vastly different circumstances and factors, which now make their relationship to the general population far different from what it was in the earlier days.

Although common report says that colored persons came to Evanston only as domestic servants, records show that some of them were craftsmen and small business men and operated independently in order to make a living. Colored persons had been in Evanston almost a half-century at the time of its incorporation in 1892. The population of the city as a whole was very small at the turn of the century. At that time there were approximately 20,000 persons; the colored population was about 700. The total population had grown from 800 in 1860 (what the colored population was at that time is not known). Today, the total population is 66,000 while the colored population is 6,000, or almost 10 per cent.

Much concern has been expressed because the colored population has continued to grow in the last fifty years from a ratio of less than 4 per cent of the total to its present percentage. In this connection it may be noted that in 1930, 15 per cent of the total population was foreign-born and the most recent census recorded the foreign-born as being 11 per cent of the total.

The colored population is a much younger group than is the white population. This is true for many reasons. Among these are the fact that the

OCT 2 10

mortality rate of the colored population is much higher than that of the white population; the birth rate is much lower than will be found in other urban centers; colored persons maturing and wishing opportunities find it necessary to leave Evanston for other places; and the longevity and health status of the white population give that group a much larger number and percentage of older persons.

There are many more women than men in both the general and the colored populations. Part of this is explained by the type of city which Evanston is. Only recently have industrial establishments begun to come into this suburban residential area. Evanston takes pride in the fact that it has been a city of homes, churches, and schools. Those who desired restful retirement came to Evanston from Chicago to live in the rustic beauty of this rural community. The churches and the academic institutions have been built and fostered by the same interest groups. As a matter of fact, Evanston had its beginning around the establishment of Northwestern University, Garrett Biblical Institute, and the Northwestern College for Women. The Methodist group constituted the primary force which contributed to the founding and growth of this city. Women have been needed in service jobs to take care of the needs of Evanston householders. A retail center has been developed here which is looked upon as the pride of the North Shore. Many exclusive shops serve the needs of the residents of this area who shop here with great satisfaction without going to the more congested city of Chicago.

Occupational Pattern

The influx of colored persons to Evanston was proportionately not as great in the 1940 census period as it was in an earlier period ending in 1920. The present increase in the colored population is, no doubt, due to the fact that many of the whites working in service jobs in Evanston have found more lucrative employment in industrial fields. These service jobs, especially those in the domestic service occupations, have called to them more marginal workers - these have been colored.

As in other urban centers, the greater proportion of the colored population has found it necessary to enter the labor market than is true of the white population. This has not been because there were more jobs for colored in this city, but, instead, because more members of the colored family found it necessary to work at some sort of job to bring the meager income up to where it would permit sufficient food, clothing, and shelter. The situation of the colored worker in Evanston can be seen in his ratio among those who were seeking employment in 1940. Although he was less than one-tenth of the population, he was almost one-third of the unemployed willing and able to work.

The major categories which provide employment for the general population of Evanston are: clerical, sales and kindred workers; professional workers; proprietors, owners, and officials; and then domestic and service workers. In the last-mentioned category, colored workers found their major employment. Very few of them had jobs in other categories. Even on the public payroll there were very few colored workers. Those employed were, up until about five years ago, almost exclusively in menial jobs. In the last decade a few policemen and school teachers have been added. Still, the great majority of the city departments have no colored workers in other than menial tasks. As is pointed out in the text of this report, the poverty of the colored community is directly related to the proportion of the public payroll which is paid to colored citizens.

In the field of private employment, only recently have colored workers gotten into jobs as operatives and in one or two of the retail stores have they been employed as clerical workers. Two of the largest employers of colored industrial workers have found them to be satisfactory performers on the job. Those which employ no colored persons have been very much concerned even about inquiry regarding the possibility of their employment.

The United States Employment Service has been able, in the recent "emergency", to place Negroes in almost any category where they were qualified. Many of those placed through the local USES are not being sent to local establishments. This clearance, however, is reflected in current conditions in the Evanston labor market. Over a period of the last year, clearances made by the local USES show that industrial opportunities for Negroes have markedly increased.

Evanston is not a town where unions have made any headway. As a matter of fact, the only lodge having offices in Evanston is one in the building trades. However, there are union workers in several of the local plants, and at present efforts are under way to organize some of the more recently established industries.

The Postwar Planning Committee, as indicated in its reports, feels that it will not have to be too much concerned about unemployment in Evanston because the number of workers who will be displaced by curtailment in industrial activity can be readily absorbed in the various service jobs which will need workers. To the colored worker this should indicate unemployment and/or return to a marginal subsistence because as retrenchment takes place, the last employed (who was the colored worker) will be the first released, and priority will be given to those who fit into the majority pattern.

Negro Business

The West Side area has made some effort to develop activities of its own to absorb as much of the additional money as possible. This has been at a slow pace because the older small businesses have first been stymied by artificial controls, which include both those superimposed by the government and isolation from the general business field; and, secondly, by a lack of sufficient vision on their part. The newer businesses have moved along at a much more rapid pace. Chief among these will be found the taxicab companies and the garages which service them. All of the businesses on the West Side are in the food and drink line and the selling of services used largely within the confines of the community. Colored persons process nothing in Evanston.

Housing

Although there are probably more apartment houses in Evanston than the casual observer realizes, Evanston is still a city of single family structures. Among owner-occupants these are much larger than among tenants. Tenants, however, are two-thirds of the occupants in the city. Only a slightly larger percentage of white families than of colored families are owner-occupants. The median value of rental for whites, however, is twice that for colored, giving an indication of the great range in values of the properties occupied by whites and the limitations of those occupied by colored.

Other limitations readily evident in the community can be seen in the fact that though colored persons in 1940 were more than 9 per cent of the population, they occupied less than 7 per cent of the dwelling units - the major

portion of these being in the West Side ghetto. This area has the smallest number of vacancies of any ward in the city. It also has the largest number of older houses and the largest number needing major repairs and without private baths. Overcrowding is prevalent here to a greater extent than in any other section of the city.

One or two efforts have been instituted to bring additional houses to the West Side area. The earlier one was stymied by purchase of the land under consideration for other purposes. The second continues at present with plans to build a number of houses in the area of Hartrey Street. Foundations for several of the buildings had been started while your investigator was in the field. Although the builders and real estate interests state that a member of the colored community is working along with them in this venture, this particular individual does not acknowledge this fact. Other colored persons who were invited to participate in the earlier venture were reluctant to do so because they were not sufficiently satisfied with the details of the proposition. In the present venture more citizens of the West Side should be thoroughly informed in order to assure that area that the houses constructed will contribute to the proper development of the area. The recent decision of the City Council with regard to delinquent special assessment taxes will in time open the way for the clearance of much land on the West Side for additional construction of homes.

A factor which contributes much to limiting the area of occupancy for colored citizens is the inclusion of restrictive covenants in the deeds of many of the properties in the City of Evanston. In this connection, it is ironic that, as mentioned in one of the earlier sections of this report, back in the 1860's and 70's Negroes owned property in what is now one of the most exclusive residential sections of the town. Today, restrictive covenants would prevent these persons from buying their own old homesteads even if they were financially able to do so.

Health

The colored death rate is one-fourth higher than that for the white population, and the birth rate, contrary to what is the story in many other urban centers, is lower than that for the white population. The former is expected, but the latter is not, just as it is surprising to find that the infant mortality rate is much lower for colored than for white. The stillbirth rates for colored, however, are five times higher. These figures give a rather odd pattern of the health problem of the colored population of Evanston. This group has a slight margin in births over deaths but not anywhere near as large as that for the white population. Thus, the annual natural increase of the colored population in Evanston has little chance of keeping pace with that of the white population. The population figures, however, for the colored group are increasing at a greater rate than for the white population because in the present emergency, as was stated above, the residents of Evanston require domestic servants to care for their household needs.

As in other cities, the diseases of poverty, which have high correlation with the substandard conditions found in the colored community, are the ones which make the heaviest toll in deaths among these people. Interestingly enough, tuberculosis tests made among colored grammar school children found no active cases. Those taken in the high school found cases among both white and colored youth, the incidence among colored being slightly higher than among white, but not anywhere near the expectation voiced by many.

There are three hospitals in Evanston which care for the health needs of the community. Two of these are general hospitals. One of these, which has no out-patient department, does not accept colored patients except in emergencies. This hospital is under Catholic auspices. The second, a Protestant institution where colored persons are welcome in the out-patient department, does not accept them in the in-patient department. Both of these hospitals will accept colored patients in the in-patient department if request for their admission is made by citizens of sufficient consequence in the community. The first-mentioned hospital, however, requests that if colored patients are admitted they do not have visitors.

The third hospital is operated by an all-colored staff and has the cooperation of the larger of the two general hospitals which provides it with surgical service, laboratory analyses, use of its blood bank, and supply of the more recently discovered drugs. This institution has 25 beds and is at present conducting a campaign to raise funds to build a new unit which will provide it with 50 beds.

Education

The great majority of the colored children live in School District 75, where they attend, in the main, Foster School. They are found in all of the other schools of District 75, with the exception of three. In District 76, the total number in attendance in all of the schools is very small. Here, colored are found in two of the four elementary schools. These two districts are those for the elementary and junior high school. The third school district is that for the high school. All of the children of the entire city go to the Evanston Township High School. Colored children are among these.

In District 75, the attendance at Foster School, mentioned above, is made up almost 100 per cent of colored children. Much controversy has arisen from conditions and problems at this school. Prior to the Fall of 1942 only one colored teacher had been employed in the City of Evanston. He was in physical education at Foster and left to join the armed forces. In the Fall of 1942 other colored teachers were added. These appointments came after a citizens' committee threatened to sue the Board of Education. Now, there are six colored teachers at Foster. The principal of this school states that conditions have been markedly improved as a result of the contribution made by these colored teachers. However, there are many minor matters which have continued to cause misunderstanding in the community as a result of activities at this school. Many of these have been mentioned in the text of this report.

School District 75 is zoned for attendance at the various schools. As is pointed out in this report, the area of residence of colored people has been gerrymandered so that the great majority of their children attend Foster School. District 76 is not zoned at all.

There are many interrelated factors in the community which lend to developing contention where colored children fit into the pattern at the high school. Among these will be found the youth center program at the YMCA, the difficulty of the students participating on an equal basis in the general programs out in the community in which the high school partakes (such as the job experience program), and the feeling on the part of colored children that they are not welcome to participate in the various extra-curricular activities, especially those which have a social aspect. The two instances which are now of the past (the locker incident and the purchase of the West Side parcel of land by the high school) remain uppermost in the minds of the West Side

citizens as being concrete evidences of the attitude of the high school toward the colored community - justifiably or not.

The administration of the high school pointed out that colored children were treated the same as other children in every instance. It went on further to point out that colored children were staying in school better than white children. As has been discussed in the text, the evidence which the administration gave disputed its own contentions, notwithstanding.

Crime and Juvenile Delinquency

With traffic violations eliminated, colored adult offenders were 30 per cent of the total court cases, indicating that their incidence here is three times higher than that in the population. The great majority of the cases were minor offenses, over 90 per cent of them being dismissed, fined-released, or placed on probation. The incidence of delinquency among youth is almost as high as the incidence among colored adults in the picture of adult crime. Among both adults and juveniles, one-fourth of the colored persons arrested were females. The great majority of the juvenile cases were not serious.

Leisure-Time Pursuits

The Bureau of Recreation has developed a rather comprehensive program for the entire city of Evanston. Two of the playfields are available, from the standpoint of distance, to the West Side community. One has year-round supervision, the second operates under a more limited program. Both have shelter houses. Neither has a community house. However, at the larger of the two, the facilities of the public school are used for activities requiring the gymnasium, auditorium, etc.

Supplementing the program of the city, there is that of the two private agencies which serve the lower Emerson Street Area. One of these agencies works more among the underprivilege than does the other. The upper Emerson Street area is that which will probably need attention from planners as additional housing units are built there and the center of the colored population shifts to that area the grave lack which is already evident in the field of recreation will, no doubt, handicap those interested in developing leisure-time programs.

The church is a vital force in the lives of the citizens of the West Side area. The edifices and congregations have a wide range, the older ones, generally speaking, being much larger than the newer ones. There is also a wide range in the qualifications of church leadership from those who have had first-class training in the best theological institutions to those who have been "called".

Social Welfare Agencies

The camping aspect of recreation is handled by the social welfare agencies. In the past season not one agency had colored youth participating in its camping program without restriction. There was one agency which stated that colored children had been invited to do so but had none among those actually in attendance during the 1944 season. Several of the agency executives are torn between the philosophy guiding their programs and what they believe to

be the desire of their financial supporters. Thus, they have been reluctant to take a stand which would commit them to unrestricted participation of colored youth in camping activities.

Services of the social agencies, as they relate to the colored community, vary from those which serve that group freely to those which exclude it totally. The more progressive agencies fall into the former category, while the others fall into the latter. In several fields, the colored population, is almost completely without service. Chief among these will be found the children's field, the field of convalescent care, care for the aged and the handicapped, and protective care for adolescent boys and girls. One or two private agencies openly state that they do not accept colored children. Additional agencies state that they accept them but give no concrete evidence of this. In the third group will be found private agencies operated by colored individuals. Those in this last-mentioned group have not enjoyed a good reputation over their years of operation and have, from time to time, given concrete evidence of the fact that the health and safety of the children have not been safeguarded while in their care.

Agencies to serve colored in the protective and correctional field are totally lacking. Colored youth coming to the attention of juvenile authorities must be placed in the adult prison cell of the city police department until they are transferred to the county juvenile detention home or until some disposition can be made of their cases.

Not one professional worker is found on the staff of a social welfare agency, except in the colored unit of the Young Men's Christian Association. In earlier years the general community pointed to the executive secretary of the YMCA as being the leader of the colored people in the social welfare field. The growing resentment felt by Negroes against segregation in any form has tended to disqualify this type of accepted leadership. Other leadership of the colored community was found in the clergy and the political groups.

Generally speaking, the program and attitude of a social welfare agency, as it relates to participation of colored persons, can be measured in direct proportion to the qualification and experience of its executive director, rather than to an announced policy established by its directors.

Race Relations

Several units have been organized for the major purpose of improving race relations. All of these groups welcome interracial participation. There have been tangible gains made as a result of the efforts of these groups. However, at present the activities of all but one are about at a standstill, and that one is now planning its strategy for a future program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Weighing the facts presented above, keeping in mind the offer of service to the Evanston area from the Chicago Urban League - which offer prompted the Council of Social Agencies to invite this study - it is recommended that:

HOUSING

Specific attention be given to the field of housing by a group of citizens from the West Side area who have as their major concern the development of

a better community. (At present such a group does not exist. It would be part of a field worker's responsibility to organize this group.)

✓Citizens from the West Side insist that any interest groups that have as their purpose construction of housing units in the West Side be made to fully inform them of their intentions.

✓The present effort of the City Planning Committee to develop buffer residential areas without sufficient concern for the welfare of the people directly affected be discouraged, and that any effort for insuring property values take into consideration development of pride on the part of all of the people in the areas of their residence.

✓A group of informed citizens hold conferences with the management and board of trustees of Northwestern University to clarify the conflicting impressions given with regard to use of the dormitories by Negro students attending that university.

Representatives from the West Side be invited to participate in the activities of the Mayor's City Planning Committee so that that committee may have the benefit both of knowledge about the West Side area and of interpretation of the thinking of the people of that area.

A community organization worker give time to promoting among the citizens of the West Side interest in making their community a more livable place, through giving time to developing the immediate surroundings of their properties as well as the structures themselves.

✓The commitment by the Real Estate Board, which states that it favors construction of homes for colored families through use of private capital, be followed through with the various lending agencies to assure prospective builders of homes a readily available supply of credit.

✓An educational program be instituted urging the people of the community to give tangible evidence of their practices supporting the tenets of democracy, by condemning any current efforts to have additional restrictive covenants placed in deeds and by lending their influence to convince individuals who have placed such restrictions that they should be withdrawn.

HEALTH

Conferences be held with both the administrative officers and the boards of directors of the two general hospitals to urge that they relax their barriers which prohibit colored persons needing medical attention from obtaining the best that is available in the community.

The colored physicians who are already invited to participate in a limited number of courtesies at the two general hospitals be urged to take full advantage of these gestures; and that their cooperation be solicited in an effort to develop these courtesies further, in order that all facilities in the hospitals may eventually be opened to them on a basis similar to that enjoyed by physicians in the general population.

Support be given to the venture to improve conditions at Community Hospital, keeping in mind the fact that this institution must be developed because the general hospitals, fully provided with modern equipment, have refused

to accept colored patients.

Conferences be held with the administrators and members of the board of directors of the general hospitals to urge that colored persons be accepted as volunteer workers, as trainees in the nurse-training program, as students in the regular nursing course, and as staff persons.

SOCIAL AGENCIES

The social welfare agencies, especially those with an appreciably large colored clientele, give disinterested consideration to employment of personnel from all racial groups.

The various voluntary agencies be urged to review their program practices, keeping in mind their basic philosophy and the extent to which they are accomplishing the purpose for which they were established in light of the present problems in the community requiring their attention.

EDUCATION

The efforts of the Service Bureau for Intercultural Education to bring the thinking of school teachers up to date with regard to racial groups, and its efforts to develop proper attitudes be reviewed with the thought of having teachers participate in an in-service training program.

Additional colored teachers be urged to apply for appointment to the public schools of Evanston, and that these be appointed in schools as vacancies occur.

The school teachers be urged to become more familiar with the conditions which prevail in the community and in the home; and that they be urged to give their time to extra-curricular activities not necessarily confined to the school grounds.

A professional worker lend his efforts to clearing up the differences which have promoted factions in the West Side Parent Teachers Association and that the Council of School Clubs be made aware of the points of contention, which lend to dissention where its relationship with the West Side group is concerned.

In all conferences, the conferees proceed in a friendly manner in the interest of developing procedure for arriving at the desired goal, instead of approaching the problem with "daggers drawn".

Through an agreed channel the facts in this study, especially those which throw some light on rumors which misrepresented the truth, be braodcast to the community.

EMPLOYMENT

Supplementation be provided for the relationship of the job experience course with employers of students from the high schools, so that additional jobs on all levels of performance will be opened to all students in accordance with their skills and merits.

A professional worker establish a relationship with the various employers of help in the Evanston area in the interest of hiring of persons without regard to race, creed, or color, in accordance with their qualifications.

The resources of the colored community in terms of skills be catalogued, and that these resources be used in the program to sell qualified persons to the employers.

The various heads of various city departments be urged to review the personnel of their respective departments with a view of weighing the extent to which the West Side has been given fair representation. This should be done from the standpoint of payroll instead of counting the number of jobs.

RECREATION

A professional worker organize the youth of the West Side for group work activities both in that area and in the general community. (In the execution of the last-mentioned aspect of this recommendation, both the West Side community and the general community must be mobilized in order to insist upon elimination of the discriminatory practices such as are prevalent in the YMCA and the camping programs of the various agencies.) < N.B.!!

Any additional expenditures in the field of recreation take into consideration the new area of development for colored residents in the west end of the Emerson Street area, realizing the fact that the two present units have limitations because of their location and the railroad and thoroughfares which separate them.

CRIME AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

The effort to move the juvenile department out of the police station be given support, and immediately some arrangement be provided so that youth who are apprehended will not require incarceration in the prison cells of the city jail.

SUGGESTED ACTION ON PART OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee seriously weigh the facts in the report and, if in body assembled it determines that the problems of the West Side require more attention than they are at present getting, the Committee, before terminating its services, do one of the following two things:

a) Select a small group of persons to act as a guiding force for instituting the recommendations embodied in this report; or

b) Urge the Council of Social Agencies to request the Chicago Urban League to provide field services for the City of Evanston to assist in the adjustment of the difficulties pointed out in this study.

If the first of the alternatives mentioned directly above is accepted, a professional worker be placed at the service of the continuing committee to work in the various field needing attention. (This person should have

background in community organization with additional knowledge in the field of housing pedagogy.)

If the second of the above alternatives is accepted, a relationship between the field worker, or field workers, from the Chicago Urban League be formally established with the Council of Social Agencies and all of the various public and voluntary agencies so that it will be publicly recognized that these are local workers with formal responsibilities.

Council of Social Agencies

6-21-45